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II The Evidence

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(2) to discuss the evidence, (3) to exhibit the theories for and against the tradition, (4) to arrive at some conclusion in the light of modern investigation, and (5) to group the bibliography with reference to handy use.

II. THE EVIDENCE.

The impulse imparted by Jahn to the incipient skepticism concerning the origin of Roman satire has within the last half century gained such headway as to cause serious scholars of Roman literature to be grouped as skeptics or as defenders of the tradition. The former have denied the existence of any such production as the dramatic *satura*, ascribing the origin of the satire to Greek influence imported into Italy through the medium of the Satyr-play⁷ and of the old Greek Comedy, while they limit the existence of the dramatic *satura* to the minds⁸ of historians and critics. The latter generally accept the age-old belief that the literary satire of the Romans is an evolution from the so-called dramatic *satura* which they regard as the native drama of Italy.

The supporters of the tradition find their evidence for the existence of the dramatic *satura* in passages from Livy, 7, 2; Horace, Epistles, 2, 1, 139-156; Vergil, Georgics, 2, 380-389; Valerius Maximus, 2, 4, 4; Diomedes, in Keil's Grammatici Latini 1, 482-492. There are besides other ancient sources containing partial accounts of the beginning of the early Roman drama. The origin and history of the word *satura* is also of vital importance as contributing evidence regarding the validity of the Roman claim. A third ground in defense of the tradition is found in the nature and treatment of the literary satire in such satirists as Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius.

The starting point in consideration of the ancient evidence is the second chapter of the seventh book of Livy's history. This is the earliest extant adequate account of the origin of the native Italian drama and is the one which has furnished the stamping ground, so to speak, of both the proponents and opponents of the tradition. The other accounts either parallel or only partially cover the ground of the one found in Livy.

LIVY.

BOOK VII, 2.

BEGINNING OF THE DRAMA.

Et hoc et insequenti anno C. Sulpicio Petico, C. Licinio Stolone consulibus pestilentia fuit. Eo nihil dignum memoria actum, nisi quod pacis deum exposcendæ causa tertio tum pest conditam urbem lectisternium fuit. Et cum vis morbi nec humanis

⁷ Keller, *Philologus* 45 (1886), 391.

⁸ A. Kiessling, *Horace's Sermones* (1886), Einleitung VII.

consiliis nec ope divina levaretur, victis superstitione animis ludi quoque scænici, nova res bellicoso populo—nam circi modo spectaculum fuerat, inter alia cælestis iræ placamina instituti dicuntur. Ceterum parva quoque, ut ferme principia omnia, et ea ipsa peregrina res fuit. Sine carmine ullo, sine imitandorum carminum actu ludiones, ex Etruria acciti, ad tibicinis modos saltantes haud indecoros motus more Tusco dabant. Imitari deinde eos juvenus simul inconditis inter se iocularia fundentes versibus cœpere, nec absoni a voce motus erant. Accepta itaque res sæpiusque usurpando excitata. Vernaculis artificibus, quia ister Tusco verbo ludio vocabatur, nomen histrionibus inditum; qui non, sicut ante, Fescennino versu similem inconpositum temere ac rudem alternis iaciebant, sed impletas modis saturas descripto iam ad tibicinem cantu motuque congruenti peragebant. Livius post aliquot annis, qui ab saturis ausus est primus argumento fabulam serere, idem scilicet, id quod omnes tum erant, suorum carminum actor, dicitur, cum sæpius revocatus vocem obtudisset, venia petita puerum ad canendum ante tibicinem cum statuisset, canticum egisse aliquanto magis vigente motu, quia nihil vocis usus impediēbat. Inde ad manum cantari histrionibus cœptum, diverbiaque tantum ipsorum voci relictā. Postquam lege hac fabularum ab risu ac soluto ioco res avocabatur et ludus in artem paulatim verterat juvenus histrionibus fabellarum actu relicto ipsa inter se more antiquo ridicula intexta versibus iactitare cœpit; quæ exodia postea appellata consertaque fabellis potissimum Atellanis sunt. Quod genus ludorum ab Oscis acceptum tenuit juvenus nec ab histrionibus pollui passa est; eo institutum manet, ut actores Atellanarum nec tribu moveantur et stipendia, tamquam expertes artis ludicre, faciant.

In 364 B. C., and in the year immediately preceding, Rome was visited by a severe epidemic. After the government officials had performed extraordinary sacrifices to secure divine favor and had exhausted human skill in their efforts to alleviate the plague, and still the violence of the pestilence did not abate, they decided to add theatrical performances to the circus exhibitions (*Ludi Romani*) which up to that time had consisted of chariot races and athletics contests. For this purpose actors were imported from Etruria who, with no words and with no action to express the meaning of words, executed dances to the accompaniment of the flute. These Etruscan dancers by their graceful movements made a distinct impression upon the Roman youth. The latter soon began to imitate these movements, at the same time engaging with one another in coarse bantering verse in dialogue form with gestures suited to the words. Thus the drama was introduced and through frequent practice gained strength. The native (Roman) performers were called *histriones*, from the Tuscan word *ister* meaning an actor; and they did not, as formerly, utter alternately, with a careless lack of continuity, verses like the Fescennine, lacking in art and in polish, but presented comic medleys (*saturas*) composed in regular metre with the several parts of the performance properly adjusted to music.

Several years after this, Livius (Andronicus) who after the medleys (*ab saturis*) was the first one to venture the composition of a play with a plot, was, as all were at that time, also the actor of his own plays and, having strained his voice by reason of too frequent repetition of these

plays, placed a slave on the stage in front of the musician to chant the verses while he himself went through with the gestures in much more vigorous and impressive fashion, because he was not now compelled to use his voice. In this way, the songs began to be sung to the gesticulations of the actors. The dialogue portions alone were left for the voice of the actors.

When, by this regulation, the scenic business was divorced from laughter and unrestrained mirth and the amusement was gradually converted into art, the younger men, giving over the exhibition of plays to professional actors, began in the old way to throw out alternately in verse ludicrous jests; these, afterwards called *exodia*, were merged exclusively into the Atellan plays. The latter form of entertainment, imported from Oscia, the youth kept in their own hands and did not suffer it to be debased by professional actors; for this reason the rule was established, which is still in force, that the actors of the Atellan farces are not degraded from their tribe and serve in the army, as if they take no part in the actor's profession.

HORACE, Epistles 2, 1, 139-156.

Agricolæ prisci, fortes parvoque beati,
condita post frumenta, levantes tempore festo
corpus et ipsum animum spe finis dura ferentem,
Cum sociis operum, pueris et coniuge fida,
Tellurem porco, Silvanum lacte piabant,
Floribus et vino Genium, memorem brevis ævi.
Fescennina per hunc inventa licentia morem
versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit,
libertasque recurrentis accepta per annos
lusit amabiliter, donec iam sævus apertam
in rabiem cœpit verti iocus et per honestas
ire domos impune minax. Doluere cruento
dente lacessiti: fuit intactis quoque cura
condicione super communi; quin etiam lex
pœnaque lata, malo quæ nollet carmine quemquam
describi: vertere modum formidine fustis
ad bene dicendum delectandumque redacti.

The (Italian) farmers of early times, courageous and happy in their small possessions, after harvesting their crops refreshed their bodies and minds, along with the companions of their labors, by performing appropriate sacrifices to Tellus, Silvanus, and Genius. The Fescennine license obtained in this way indulged freely in coarse banter in dialogue verse. This freedom (of speech) allowed, as the years passed by, was accepted in a good-natured way, until the rough joking developed into personal abuse and, in threatening fashion, with impunity, entered respectable homes. Those attacked smarted under the cruel invective, those who

were not thus annoyed felt a grave concern for the general welfare. In consequence of this, a law providing adequate penalty was passed forbidding any one to satirize another in abusive verse. Under the dread of severe punishment, they were now forced to speak in an agreeable and pleasing manner.

VERGIL, *Georgics*, 2, 380-389.

non aliam ob culpam Baccho caper omnibus aris
cæditur et veteres ineunt proscœnia ludi,
præmiaque ingeniis pagos et compita circum
Thesidæ posuere, atque inter pocula læti
mollibus in pratis unctos saluere per utres.
nec non Ausonii Troia gens missa coloni
versibus incompitis ludunt risuque soluto,
oræque corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis,
et te Bacche, vocant per carmina læta, tibi
oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.

In verses 380-385, Vergil sketches the celebrations attendant upon the worship of Bacchus (Dionysius) as performed among the Athenians (Thesidæ) to promote the fertility of the vine.

Speaking of the same thing in Italy, he says: "The early Italian (Ausonii) settlers also make merry with rude verse (Fescennine) and unrestrained mirth and put on ghastly masks of hollowed bark and call Thee, Bacchus, through jocular verse and suspend waving faces of Thee from the tall pine."

VALERIUS MAXIMUS II. 4. 4.

Nunc causam instituendorum ludorum ob origine sua repetam. C. Sulpicio Betico, C. Licinia Stolone Coss. intoleranda vis ortæ pestilentia civitatem nostram a bellicosis operibus revocatam domestici atque intestini mali cura afflixerat, iamque plus in exquisito et novo cultu religionis, quam in ullo humano consilio positum opis videbatur; itaque placandi cælestis numinis gratia compositis carminibus vacuas aures præbuit, ad id tempus circensi spectaculo contenta, quod primus Romulus, raptis virginibus Sabinis, consualium nomine celebravit. Verum, ut est mos hominum parvula initia pertinaci studio prosequendi, venerabilibus erga deos verbis iuventus, rudi atque incompósito motu corporum iocabunda, gestus adiecit; eaque res ludium ex Hetruria arcessendi causam præbuit, cuius decora pernicitas vetusto ex more Curetum Lydorumque, a quibus Hetrusci originem traxerunt, novitate grata Romanorum oculos permulsit. Et quia ludius apud eos histrio appellabatur, scenico nomen *histrionis* inditum est. Paulatim deinde ludrica ars ad satyrarum modos perrepsit, a quibus primus omnium poeta Livius ad fabularum argumenta spectantium animos transtulit; isque sui operis actor, cum sæpius a populo revocatus vocem obtudisset, adhibito pueri et tibicinis concentu, gesticulationem tacitus peregit. Atellani autem ab Oscis acciti sunt; quod genus delectationis italica severitate temperatum, ideoque vacuum nota est; nam neque tribu movetur, neque a militaribus stipendiis repellitur.

The account in Valerius Maximus II. 4. 4. runs as follows: "Now I

shall trace from its very origin the reason for establishing plays. In the consulship of Caius Sulpicius Beticus and Caius Lucinius Stolo, there arose a pestilence of insufferable virulence which had overwhelmed the state, called away from military operations, by its concern for internal affliction, and now it appeared that more help was to be secured through a new and well considered religious worship than through any human skill; accordingly, the state, content up to this time with the circus games which Romulus, after carrying off the Sabine women, first celebrated under the name of *Consualia*, gave its attention, not now otherwise occupied, to verses that had been composed for the purpose of appeasing the wrath of the gods. But, according to the human custom of following up small beginnings by persistent exertion, the youth added to words full of veneration for the gods, coarse jokes and gestures with movements of the body that were lacking in grace and culture; this condition furnished the reason for securing from Etruria actors whose graceful nimbleness after the ancient custom of the Curetes and the Lydians, from whom the Etrurians derived their ancestry, charmed the eyes of the Romans with its pleasing novelty. And since the actor among the Etrurians was called *Histrion*, the name *histrion* was applied to the player. The comic art was gradually interwoven into the melodies of the *Satyræ* from which the poet Livius first of all turned the minds of the spectators to the connected plots of plays; and he, having injured his voice as an actor of his own plays by the too frequent *encores* of the audience, placed a slave on the stage to chant verses to the accompaniment of a flute player, while he himself silently went through with the pantomime. The Atellanes, however, were brought from the Osci; this kind of amusement was tempered by Italian severity, and on this account is free from dishonor, for the performer of the Atellanes is neither removed from his tribe nor prohibited from military service."

DIOMEDES, *Grammatici Latini* (Keil), 485.

Satira dicta a satyris, quod similiter in hoc carmine ridiculæ res pudendæque dicuntur, quæ velut a satyris proferuntur et fiunt; sive satura a lance, quæ referta variis multisque primitiis in sacro apud priscos dis ferebatur et a copia ac saturitate rei vocabatur * * *; sive a quodam genere farciminis, quod multis rebus refertum saturam dicit Varro vocitatum. Est autem hoc positum in II libro Plautinarum quæstionum 'Satura est uva passa et polenta et nuclei pini ex mulso consparsa. Ad hæc alii addunt et de malo punico grana.' Alii autem dictam putant a lege satura, quæ uno rogatu multa simul comprehendat, quod scilicet et satura carmine multa simul pœmata comprehenduntur.

"Satire is named from the satyric plays (*σάτυροι*), because in this kind of verse shameful and jesting things are said, which are exhibited and done as if by the Satyrs; or from a full dish, which filled with many

varied first fruits constituted an offering to the gods among the early inhabitants (of Italy) and from its fulness and abundance was called *satura* * * *; or from a kind of stuffing which, filled with many ingredients, Varro says was called *satura*. The following, however, has been set forth in the second book of the Plautine Questions, 'Satura consists of raisins and pearl barley and pine kernels moistened with honey-wine. In addition to these ingredients some give also the seeds of the Punic (red?) apple.' Others, however, think it is named from the law, *satura*, which includes many laws in a single enactment at the same time, because of course in the poetry, *satura*, many poems are included at the same time."

III. DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE.

LIVY 7, 2.

In this chapter, after indicating the circumstances which induced the magistrates in their perplexity to obtain performers from Etruria, Livy describes the several stages in the development of the native drama.

The first stage is noted in the performances of the dancers from Etruria who in not ungraceful fashion executed the dances of their native country, without words and without gesticulations, to the music of the flute (4).

The second stage indicates the effect which the performance of the foreigners had upon the Roman youth who began to imitate the Etruscans in a kind of rude dialogue (*inconditis inter se iocularia fundentes versibus*) accompanied by dancing and suitable gestures of the music of the flute. This is really the first stage of purely Roman development where we find the Etruscan and Roman elements harmonized (5). The Roman youth used the Fescennine verses, as is attested by the author in his description of the next stage of development (*non sicut antea Fescennino versu similem, etc.*).

The third stage is pointed out when the Roman youth yield the performance of this crude improvisation to professional actors (*histriones*) who further develop and improve this by a variety of melodies, accompanied by the music of the *tibia* and appropriate gestures (*impletas modis saturas descripto iam ad tibicinem cantu motque congruenti peragebant*) 6, 7.

The fourth stage is seen in the introduction of Livius Andronicus of a drama with a plot (*ab saturis ausus est primus argumento serere*). Livius gave unity to the *saturae* which before were disconnected and loosely related. He also added other improvements (8-10). At this point the native drama reaches the artistic stage in its development.

The fifth stage gives us a fully developed drama with an after-play.